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THE NEGRO IN VIRGINIA

A paper read before the
Diocesan Council in
Petersburg, Virginia

June, 1904

BY
C. BRAXTON BRYAN

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The Negro in Virginia

C. BRAXTON BRYAN

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IT is generally stated that the first Negroes brought to Virginia were twenty in number, and that they were brought about the first of September, 1619, in a Dutch ship which came to Jamestown and sold them or traded them for provisions. But the records of the Virginia Company and the English state papers show conclusively that the twenty Negroes who actually arrived at that time were brought, not by a Dutch ship but by a famous English ship, the *Treasurer*, which belonged to Lord Rich, the Earl of Warwick, and others who were interested in the Colony. The *Treasurer* had been cruising in the West Indies and had captured a Spanish ship and taken her cargo, these Negroes among other things. It was an act not much, if any, short of piracy, as there was peace between England and Spain. It is true that a man-of-war of Flushing did come into Jamestown in consort with the *Treasurer*, and it was convenient to give it out that the Negroes had come in her, but it afterwards transpired that they certainly came in the *Treasurer*; and Lord Rich had trouble enough explaining the action of his ship. The captain of the ship, having the Negroes on his hands, left a part of them in the Bermudas where Lord Rich had a plantation, and twenty were left at Jamestown.¹ The captain was not looking for Negroes, and it was an accident that they were found in the captured Spanish ship and so brought to Virginia. But neither were there any scruples about taking them, as Lord Rich had already received a charter from King James authorizing himself and about forty other prominent Englishmen to engage in the Guinea and Binney trade on the coast of Africa.

In this way the Negro began to be introduced, but very few at first. In February 1624, there were only twenty-two Negroes in Virginia. In a muster of the plantation in "Elizabeth Cittie" County, ("the Corporation of Elizabeth Cittie" as it was then called) in June, 1625, there were but three Negroes in the population of 345. These were two of the original twenty, named Antoney and Isabell, and their child, born in Virginia and named William, probably after their owner, Captain William Tucker, who was commander of the Corporation. This child was baptized.² The list of the living and dead in Virginia at this period shows that, apart from the massacre of 1622, about twenty-five per cent of the population died year by year of sickness; while the interesting fact is also disclosed that not only were no Negroes killed by the Indians in the massacre but only one Negro had

¹ See the "First Republic in America" by Alexander Brown, pp. 324-327, 356-359

² Hotton's "Emigrants"

died, although three more had been imported, making twenty-two Negroes in Virginia in February, 1624. This afforded a strong motive for the introduction of more Negroes, which was gradually acted upon. Captain Tucker had also an Indian servant, named Willian Crshaw, after a distinguished clergyman in England who was a great friend of the Colony. This Indian was also baptized. His Indian name had been Chouponke. Thus the first recorded baptisms of this parish are of an Indian and a Negro child. There were three ministers of the Gospel in Elizabeth City about this time: Rev. George Keith, from 1617 until 1625; Rev. Jonas Stockton, 1621 to 1628; and Rev. Mr. Bolton, 1621 to 1623. Which of them had the privilege of baptizing this Indian and this Negro child, probably the first Negro born in Virginia, cannot now be told. One other Negro child is recorded as being in James City in 1625.

Negroes were taken to the Bermudas by the English three years before these were brought to Virginia, i. e., in the summer of 1616. The idea at first was that they were "the most proper and cheapest instruments for the plantations that can be, but not safe to be anywhere but under the Governor's eye," that is, to be kept at headquarters, and worked as a public force. This was soon changed and the Negroes distributed. Another cargo of Negroes were brought to Virginia in 1629, under circumstances similar to the first. The ship *Fortune* of London encountered and captured a vessel loaded with Negroes from Angola, and sold the cargo in Virginia. As late as 1648 there were not more than three hundred Negroes in Virginia.

In 1638 slavery was introduced into Massachusetts. The ship *Desire* of Salem (She had been built at Marblehead in 1636.) brought into Massachusetts a number of Negroes who were sold without difficulty. More in his "History of Slavery in Massachusetts" says: "This first entrance into the slave trade was not a private individual speculation. It was the enterprise of the authorities of the Colony." The Pequods captured in the battle of Mystic River, May, 1637, by the combined forces of Massachusetts and Connecticut were reduced to slavery, and proving refractory, were shipped to the West Indies and exchanged for Negroes. In 1720 Governor Shute informed the Lords of Trade that there were 2,000 slaves in Massachusetts, including a few Indians. He adds that thirty-seven male and six female Negroes were imported that year, and says, "No difference for seven years last past." In 1742 there were 1,514 Negro slaves in Boston alone. In 1754 there were 4,489 slaves in Massachusetts over sixteen years old. In 1764 the number was 5,779; in 1776 there were 5,249; in 1784, 4,377; in 1786, 4,371; and in 1790, 6,001. This slavery, which spread to all the New England Colonies, was based upon the action of the authorities of Massachusetts, who in 1641 adopted the Fundamentals or Body of Liberties which recognized and authorized the slavery of "captives taken in just wars, and such strangers as willingly

sell themselves or are sold to us." (Moore on Slavery in Massachusetts.)

But the Northern climate not being adapted to the Negro and the interest of the people being commercial and maritime rather than agricultural, the number of slaves was never large in proportion to the white population. As was natural, however, most of the American vessels engaged in the slave trade were owned in New England; and Nathaniel Hawthorne in his researches found reason to think that the venerable Mayflower herself was engaged in that trade at one time, having carried a cargo of Negroes from Guinea to the Barbadoes in 1647.¹ "Go to Guinea" was not unheard-of advice for a New England man whose fortune needed replenishing at that period and for long afterwards; and slavery existed unquestioned from one end of the country to the other. But when the English, whether North or South, who had had no experience of slavery or of Africans, first, came personally in contact with the raw African, the wild savage hardly seemed human to the Englishman. He could manage him, tame him, so to speak, and get work out of him; or if he could not work him profitably he could sell him; and in the South at least it was found that the Negro would not die under climatic influences in a high degree fatal to a white man. But the record shows that even really religious and humane Englishmen were slow to recognize the human and spiritual capacities of the crude savages they had introduced among themselves. To make Christians out of them seemed at first impossible, to baptize their children seemed grotesque and useless. There were exceptions (Captain William Tucker seems to have been one, although he was a terrible and bitter Indian fighter.) but the average Englishman at first scarcely recognized in the Negro any spiritual capacities, and seems to have been unconscious of doing injustice either to himself or to the Negro by this position. Only time and the development of the Negro in contact with the white man could change this.

Even after the immense advance that the Negroes in America have made since those early days, it is still found much easier to maintain a perfect theory at a distance, than a corresponding practice in actual and constant contact with the inferior race. Those Englishmen, laying the foundation of this great country, when judged by laws of their own making, and compared with the rest of their countrymen, appear as conscientious and just as others. They may be judged by their fruits, in the civilization they produced, and the nation they had so large a share in developing. The moral aspects of slavery seem not at that time to have taken hold on the minds of any people; and our opinions and principles which are the result of two hundred years of experience and progress are not applicable to the case in that remote

¹ This inference, however, may be a mistake, as the Mayflower which sailed from Boston in 1647, and carried a cargo of Negroes from Africa to the Barbadoes, is said to have been of 350 tons burden, while the tonnage of the old Mayflower of 1621 was only 180 tons, as recorded by Edward Arber in the "Story of the Pilgrims," p. 389. There were several English ships about that time named the Mayflower.

day. Of one thing these Englishmen were careful from the beginning ; namely, the preservation of their race as far as possible from what they regard as a degrading admixture. The laws provided, and the records of cases of severe civil and ecclesiastical discipline, testify to the early and pronounced sentiment on the subject. On the other hand, as the number of Negroes increased, and contact with civilization wrought its changes through association and discipline; there was an increasing sense of obligation towards the Negroes in spiritual as well as in other respects.

But efforts to Christianize them were beset with all sorts of difficulties for which experience had as yet provided no precedent and no remedy. It must be borne in mind, moreover, that the Negroes brought with them from Africa not merely barbarous natures and customs, but superstitions and beliefs of the most degrading character, from which it was almost impossible to deliver them, and which clung to them through generations of contact with civilization and Christianity. Even at this day the mass of Negroes are influenced by superstitions in a degree often unsuspected by and incomprehensible to white people. Only an intimate knowledge of the Negro discloses this side of his nature, and it may be doubted if the white man ever really comprehends it, although all who have had much to do with the less intelligent masses of Negroes recognize the power of their superstitions in their social and religious life, while the difficulties growing out of the great disparity between the races were a constant quantity which time has only emphasized.

That the representatives of the most advanced and liberty-loving race of men on earth, in laying the foundations of this nation where the greatest progress in material development and in civil and religious liberty was to be achieved, should in the very outset of their course have linked themselves in the institution of slavery with one of the lowest orders of mankind, was indeed a portentous fact. While, as we have seen, the beginning of slavery was almost accidental, the fact that the subject of it, the African Negro, was so far removed in racial qualities from the Englishman into whose hands he had fallen, made it the more easy for the Englishman, in spite of his quickened sense of liberty and religion, to make the African his slave. It would have been too great a violation of his intellectual and moral sense for the Englishman to have made a slave of a man who was his equal, as the Roman did of the Greek. Such slavery was possible only under a much lower moral and spiritual development; but at least it was free from some of the greatest difficulties which attended and still survive this later form of slavery which Christian Englishmen were capable of practicing. In the case of the Roman master, the polished Greek might teach the master letters, religion, art; and the beautiful Greek slave might be first the admired companion, and then the accepted matron of the Roman, and all this often occurred ; but in Negro slavery

nature forbade all of this. The marked disparity between the races, which made slavery easy, made it the more difficult for the Negro to approach the civilization of the Englishman, while any thought of assimilation of the Negro stock by the English was never contemplated. There might be degrading mixture, but the product was generally stamped with weakness. It is true, at least this theory has been maintained, and later experience has seemed to show, that where such mixture was effected between Negro and Spanish or French blood, as was sometimes illustrated in Louisiana, the result appeared more favorable; indicating a possibility of assimilation between the Negro and Latin races which did not exist between the Negro and the Anglo-Saxon. Between these the barriers have proved inexorable.

The great hope, and the great inconsistency, of human nature is the possibility of either an individual or a society holding sincerely great spiritual and religious truths along with social conditions by no means in the highest degree consistent with these truths. The truth of Christianity remains the leaven and redeeming power in human society, while social conditions, with their attendant inconsistencies, vary with the ages, and with climes and people. For one to fix his attention upon the truth which he holds, and upon his neighbor's inconsistency, is but to illustrate once more the condition of the mote and the beam, and to fail to learn the lessons of history. These Englishmen in America, who were trying their hands at slavery, were in their several ways, whether puritan or churchman, distinctly religious, and while dealing with Negroes, either holding and working them, or importing and selling them to others as seemed convenient, they seem to have been on a par of moral perception or obtuseness. None of them realized the import and consequences of what they were doing as we do now. But the one who held the Negro and worked him, came in the end, as was natural, to know him best, and practically to be drawn into greater personal sympathy with him, at the same time receiving, as the result rather of experience than of prejudice, the strongest impression of the radical nature of the racial differences.

But crude and unpromising as the Negro was, the religious Englishman could not continue to hold him without trying to make a Christian out of him. In his efforts to do this a curious question occurred to the minds of some of the early planters as to what the effects of baptism might be on the civil status of the Negro. Would it set him free civilly? This was settled by an act of the Assembly in 1667, declaring that "the conferring of baptism doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedom"; and the intent of the act was "that divers masters, freed from this doubt, may more carefully endeavor the propagation of Christianity by permitting children, though slaves, or those of greater growth if capable, to be admitted to that sacrament." (Henning, vol. 2, p. 260.)

The reports to the Bishop of London (of which extracts are given

below) and the old vestry books testify that many Negroes were baptized, and became sometimes earnest members of the church. The early baptism records and communion lists of Elizabeth City Parish have been lost, but the oldest record book of Bruton Parish (Williamsburg) shows that during twenty-five years, between 1746 and 1797, of which the records have been preserved, as many as 1,122 Negroes were baptized, sometimes as many as from forty to one hundred in one year. It is interesting to observe that during the seven years 1762 to 1768 inclusive, George Washington, who owned slaves in that parish, had eleven Negroes baptized. Such baptisms are recorded frequently in the old church records. In 1672 an act was passed requiring the birth and age of every Negro born in the colony to be recorded in the parish register; this was for civil purposes. There are many pages of such records, Robert Carter of Lancaster County owned at least a thousand slaves, and when he built the noble church which still stands in that county, he reserved one-fourth of it for his tenants and his servants, besides a large pew for his family. This was about 1732. Negroes were permitted in all the churches.

The following replies made to the Bishop of London by clergymen in Virginia in 1724 to the question, "Are there any infidels, bond or free, in your parish; and what means are used for their conversion?" show that the religious instruction of the Negro was by no means wholly disregarded, and indicate also some of the difficulties.

York Hampton Parish, York County. "I know of no infidels in my parish except slaves. I exhort their masters to send them to me to be instructed and in order to their conversion I have set apart every Saturday in the afternoon and catechise them at my glebe house."

Fran. Fontaine.

Petworths Parish, Gloucester County. "I have no Indians in my parish but have several infidels, Negro slaves brought from Africa, and such as are born in the country. Their masters very often bring them to read, and send them to the church and minister to be further instructed that they may be baptized, and many are so."

Emanuel Jones.

Elizabeth City Parish, Elizabeth City County. "There are many infidels, though very few here. The owners are generally careful to instruct those that are capable of instruction, and to bring them to baptism; but it is impossible to instruct those that are grown up before they are carried from their own country; they never being able either to speak or understand our language perfectly."

James Falconer.

Accomack Parish, Eastern Shore. "There are very few of the natives, but a great many of the Negroes who come to church; of such, I have baptized since I came (i. e. during fifteen years) about 200, and instruct them at their masters' houses."

William Black.

The continual introduction of such crude barbarians from the wilds of Africa, and the difficulty, often impossibility, of their learning

any amount of English, together with their influence over the Negroes born in the Colony, may well account in large measure, under the circumstances of remote plantation life, for the slow progress of Christianity among Negroes. After all, it was not so much through the service of the churches, which were few and far between, and scantily attended by Negroes, but through the personal contact with the white population that any progress in Christianity was made by the Negroes. And then it must be remembered that their closest contact with the white people during the earlier Colonial period would be with the indented servants with whom they worked side by side, and that these servants were generally of the lowest and most ignorant class of the English population. At first the labor of the crude Negro was confined to the fields and woods. They were "field hands," not house servants, the latter being taken from the best class of the indented servants. When, however, by gradual civilization, a class of Negroes grew up who could be taken into the houses of their owners, and those more kindly and close relations began to be formed which so often existed between masters and mistresses and their domestic servants, then religious characters of no inferior type began to be formed, and through the influence of these the whole body of the Negro population was reached, and in a measure influenced as was impossible before. As was inevitable, the ideas of Christianity received by even these more enlightened servants, and conveyed to their less favored fellows, while in the main true to the Gospel, were much influenced by racial characteristics and the circumstances of their lives; for though greatly in advance of their savage brothers and sisters fresh from Africa, they were themselves far removed from the mental and spiritual standpoint of their masters. So the Christianity of the Negro differed from the first in shades and quality from that of the white people, and this was recognized and allowed for. As the body of Christian Negroes increased it was found practically most difficult by conscientious and painstaking masters to hold and satisfy them within the organization of white churches. The Negroes naturally drew together with such Christianity as they had, sincere efforts to the contrary notwithstanding. No large and growing congregations of Negroes ever existed in connection with white organizations.

The nearest approach to exceptions known to the writer were in the cases of St. Michael's and St. Philip's Churches in Charleston, South Carolina, where in 1818 there were in St. Michael's 350 white and 130 colored communicants, and in St. Philip's 320 white and 180 colored communicants. They doubtless formed distinct charges in these congregations. These churches were the leading Episcopal churches in the State of South Carolina. Indeed, from before the Revolution down to the war of 1861-65, there were probably more colored people connected with white churches in South Carolina than in any other state; and in the same way considerable numbers of Ne-

groes were connected with white churches of other denominations in South Carolina and other Southern States, but such congregations were found to do best when they worshiped apart and were ministered to by faithful white ministers.

There was some question in South Carolina also as to the lawfulness of baptizing Negroes, and as to the effect of baptism on their civil status. In 1712 the Legislature passed an act declaring it right and lawful to seek the conversion of the Negroes and to have them baptized. Consequently, about 1727, the clergy in that Colony are found giving a part of their time to the instruction of Negroes; and the Bishop of London addressed two pastoral letters to the English Colonies and to the missionaries working in them on the subject, urging them to do all they could for the conversion of the slaves. In 1713 the Rev. Mr. Taylor in St. Andrew's Parish had most encouraging results in such work. Through the efforts of Commissary Garden of South Carolina, a schoolhouse was built for Negroes by private subscription in Charleston in 1742, and Commissary Garden purchased two intelligent boys, Andrew and Harry, and had them trained to teach in this school. Meantime the school was kept going, and in 1743 there were thirty children in it. For more than twenty years this school was maintained with from sixty to seventy children daily taught the elements of an English education, and also instructed in religion. In addition adults were taught at night, and Commissary Garden recommended the establishment of other similar schools.

In 1764, the Rev. Mr. Smith, afterwards Bishop Smith of South Carolina, was rector of St. Philip's, Charleston, and was keeping up the school. Not long after this Andrew, one of the teachers, died, and Harry, the other one, turned out profligate, so that owing to the difficulty of getting other teachers, the school languished and was finally abandoned.¹

When Whitfield was in America he took much interest in the condition of the Negroes. We have a glimpse of his feelings towards them in his diary under date of July 24, 1740. He was then preaching in South Carolina, and was ill at the home of a prominent gentleman who lived in St. Helena Parish, the southeast parish in that Colony. He says, "The poor Negroes crowded around the windows, and by their looks and officiousness expressed great concern for me. Their master had acquainted them, I believe, that I was their friend." Again, August, 24, 1740, writing of the same gentleman and his brother, he says: "By my advice they resolved to build a Negro school. A young stage player, convinced when I was in New York last, who providentially came to Georgia, is to be their first master."

How this school turned out I do not know, but one of these gentlemen who was deeply interested in the spiritual welfare of the Negroes, corresponded with Wesley in their behalf, and had one of his own

¹ Dalcho's "History of the Church in South Carolina."

Negroes trained to teach and preach to the other Negroes. His work grew to be an established church, and survives until this day, and it is the largest colored church in Savannah, Ga, and the oldest colored Baptist church in the country. His master helped and protected this man in his work as a slave, and still more when he became free. The Negro preacher was highly respected in Savannah. A history of this church has recently been published by its present pastor, a Negro.

By the time of the Revolution the capacity of the Negro to be not only a good workman but a worthy friend and good Christian was abundantly established. Previous to the Revolution a free Negro mulatto or Indian was permitted to enlist in the militia in Virginia, but could only serve as a drummer, trumpeter, pioneer, or laborer (Hening, vol. 5, page 17: 1738); but after 1777 Negroes having their certificates of freedom were allowed to enlist without the above restrictions (Hening, vol. 9, page 280); and certain slaves who had been represented as freemen by their owners and had been enlisted as substitutes for freemen from whom service was due, were after the war emancipated by act of the General Assembly, they having faithfully served their term of enlistment.

The spirit of liberty which was abroad in the land was taking earnest account of the condition of the slaves. In this Virginia was among the first. In her petition to the Crown in 1772 (April 1), Virginia begged that she might be permitted to assent to such laws as would at least check the pernicious slave trade.¹ In the first clause of her constitution, adopted June 29, 1776, before the Declaration of Independence was passed, she cited as one of the reasons for her separation from Great Britain the inhuman use of the King's negative in refusing to allow such legislation (Hening, vol. 1, pp. 50-51). In the midst of the Revolution, in 1778, she passed the first law enacted in America prohibiting the slave trade and the importation of slaves into Virginia (Hening, vol. 9, pp. 471-472). In 1779 Jefferson, Wythe, and Pendleton, in revising the Code of Virginia, prepared a bill for the emancipation of the slaves born after the passage of the act; but the exigencies of the Revolution, the great number of the slaves, and especially the difficulties of the disposition proposed to be made of them, which was that they should eventually be colonized outside of the State, made the bill appear impracticable, and it was not introduced.² In 1783 Virginia ceded to the Union her vast domain in the Northwest—the territory representing the states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, but then included in the County of West Augusta in Virginia. This territory she held securely under her charter, and had made her claim good by her conquest under General George Rogers Clark in 1779. In the Conditions for the Government of this vast territory it was settled in

¹ Tucker's Blackstone, vol. 1, appen. p. 52.

² Jefferson's Notes, Ford Ed. p. 17, and Tucker's Blackstone, vol. 1, appen. p. 72.

1787 that slavery should be forever excluded from it.

After the Declaration of Independence the Northern States, beginning with New Hampshire in 1777 and ending with New Jersey in 1804, gradually abolished slavery. Negroes born in Massachusetts after the adoption of her constitution in 1780 were declared to be free. But emancipation was generally effected by the adoption of measures for a gradual abolition. "But the principal operation of at least the latter change was simply to transfer Northern slaves to Southern markets,"¹ and resulted in but small loss to those states either in money or population. How small the slave element in the Northern States was at that time is illustrated in the case of Massachusetts where the proportion between the white and Negro population was 65 to 1, while south of Delaware more than one-third of the whole population, and four-fifths of the tillers of the soil were black.² A deeper test of the interest of New England in the question of slavery was found when, upon the adoption of the Constitution of the United States in 1787, the question of the abolition of the slave trade was before the Constitutional Convention. Virginia, who had abolished the the importation of slaves into her boundaries nine years before, in 1778, now through her representative, Mr. Madison, urged the prompt abolition of the trade by act of the Constitution. But in opposition to this it was moved by those interested in continuing the slave trade that the date of the abolition of the trade be made 1800—twelve years off; and this was amended by a motion to make it 1808—twenty years off. Mr. Madison, representing Virginia, opposed both motions, and said: "Twenty years will produce all the mischief that can be apprehended from the liberty to import slaves. So long a term will be more dishonorable to the American character than to say nothing about it in the Constitution." In estimating the real feeling of New England towards the slave trade it should be noted that at this crucial time in the formation of our Constitution, New England voted solidly not only to continue the trade until 1800 but to extend it until 1808, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia voting with New England against New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Virginia.³

Along with the efforts of Virginia in behalf of liberty, it is important to note the calm estimate of Negro nature and capacity made by the best informed and most ardent advocates of emancipation in Virginia at that time. Jefferson in his "Notes on Virginia," 1784, and Judge St. George Tucker in his "Notes on Blackstone," 1803, both of whom advanced plans for the gradual emancipation of the Negro, record estimates of their qualities and capacities which are well worthy of study to-day. While earnestly seeking the liberation and advance-

¹ Encyclopedia Brit. vol. 22, p. 142.

² Tucker's Blackstone, vol. 1, appen. p. 70.

³ Madison's Journal. vol. 2, pp. 578, 608; new edition published by Scott, Foresman & Co. Chicago, 1898. Alex. Stephens, War Between the States, vol. 1, p. 628.

ment of the Negro, they knew that race too well to overlook the radical differences which separated them from the white man; and the facts with which they were familiar qualified their enthusiasm and their hopes.

Nothing could be more dispassionate or scrupulous than Mr. Jefferson's appreciation of the Negro. In a comprehensive and philosophical estimate he notes particulars in which the Negro is inferior to the white man physically and intellectually, adding that "the improvement of the blacks in body and mind in the first instance of their mixture with the whites, has been observed by everyone, and proves that their inferiority is not the effect merely of their condition of life." (Jefferson's Notes, p. 181. Ford Ed.) But with the data before him he is loath to adopt the conclusions to which it tends, and says: "To justify a general conclusion requires many observations, even where the subject may be submitted to the anatomical knife, to optical glasses, to analysis by fire or by solvents. How much more where it is a faculty, not a substance, we are examining; where it eludes the research of all the senses; where the conditions of its existence are various and variously combined; where the effects of those which are present or absent bid defiance to calculation; let me add too as a circumstance of great tenderness, where our conclusion would degrade a whole race of men from the rank in the scale of beings which their Creator may perhaps have given them. To our reproach it must be said, that though for a century and a half we have had under our eye the races of black and red men, they have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history. I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both in body and mind. It is not against experience to suppose that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualifications. Will not a lover of natural history, then, one who views the gradations in all the races of animals with the eye of philosophy, excuse an effort to keep those in the department of man as distinct as nature has formed them? This unfortunate difference of colour, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people. Many of their advocates, while they wish to vindicate the liberty of human nature, are anxious also to preserve its dignity and beauty. Some of these, embarrassed by the question, 'What further is to be done with them?' join themselves in opposition with those who are actuated with by sordid avarice only. Among the Romans emancipation required but one effort. The slave when made free, might mix with, without staining the blood of his master. But with us a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond reach of mixture." (Jefferson's Notes, pp. 183-184).

As we know, Mr. Jefferson's plan for putting the Negro beyond reach of mixture was by a gradual emancipation and deportation to

some district outside the United States, but, as we have seen, that plan was judged impracticable. Judge Tucker's proposal for gradual emancipation was published twenty-four years later, in 1803, and differed from Jefferson's in regarding deportation on any effective scale as quite impossible, and provided against the mixture of the races by emphasizing the political and social disabilities already imposed upon the Negro, at the same time encouraging the emancipated Negroes to disperse into parts of the country where their numbers were few. Neither of them regarded the enfranchisement of the Negro as a remedy to be considered. Mr. Jefferson says: "It will probably be asked, why not retain and incorporate the Negro into the state, and thus save the expense of supplying by importation of white settlers, the vacancies they will leave? Deep-rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections by the blacks of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances will divide us into parties and produce convulsions which will probably never end but with the extermination of one or the other race. To these objections which are political, may be added others which are physical and moral." (Notes, p. 178) Then follows his comparison of the Negro with the whites. In this connection Judge Tucker quotes the observation of the French traveler Chatteleanu that "In the present case it is not only the slave who is beneath the master, it is the Negro who is beneath the white man. No act of enfranchisement can efface this unfortunate distinction." (Tucker's *Blackstone*, vol. 1. appen. p. 75)

In December, 1816, the Virginia Legislature passed the following resolutions: "Resolved that the Executive be requested to correspond with the President of the United States for the purpose of obtaining a territory on the coast of Africa or at some other place not within the States or territorial Government of the United States, to serve as an asylum for such persons of color as are now free and may desire the same, and for those who may hereafter be emancipated." The legislatures of Maryland and Tennessee passed similar resolutions. Upon the conception of this plan Mr. Jefferson wrote, "It is the most desirable measure which could be adopted for gradually drawing off this part of our population."

Previous to 1800 several attempts to procure such a country had been secretly made by the General Assembly of Virginia through a correspondence between the Executive of that State and the President of the United States. But nothing effectual was done until 1816. To carry out the objects of this resolution, the "American Society for colonizing the free people of color of the United States" was formed, with its headquarters in Washington, and Bushrod Washington as its first President. In 1819 the Convention of the Diocese of Virginia expressed hearty approbation of the work of the Society, and the Reverend William Meade of Virginia, afterwards the distinguished Bishop

Meade, was chosen its Commissioner to negotiate with the Governor of Georgia for the purchase of a number of African slaves which had been brought there contrary to the law. Having accomplished this mission, Mr. Meade canvassed the states from Georgia to Maine in behalf of the Society. Such men as William Meade and John Brockenbrough of Virginia, Francis S. Key of Maryland, Timothy Pickering of Massachusetts, Bishop Hopkins of Vermont, Wm. H. Crawford, and Bushrod Washington were the leaders of the movement. Through the efforts of President Monroe the tract of country on the west coast of Africa, now known as Liberia, was secured, and actual colonization began in 1820, when the first load of eighty-two colonists was sent over. By 1834 the Society had raised and expended nearly half a million of dollars, including \$130,000 voted by Congress, and colonized 2,931 free and recently emancipated Negroes in Liberia. In 1829 Mr. Monroe said, "The American Colonization Society has at all times solemnly disavowed any purpose of interfering with the institutions or rights of our Southern communities. By the soundest and most judicious minds of our country it has, however, been regarded as developing and demonstrating the practicableness and utility of a plan which commends itself as worthy of adoption to those individuals and states who desire not only to benefit the free people of color, while they relieve themselves by their removal, but also to diminish and finally eradicate what all sober and unprejudiced minds regard as the greatest of our national evils, the system of slavery." (Drewry's *Southampton Insurrection*, pp. 171-72.) But sincerely as this movement had been undertaken by the friends both North and South of the free Negro and the slave, it was not to be expected that a measure of this kind could progress without being suspected and opposed. "The Quakers and other abolitionists regarded it as an artful device of Southern planters to get rid of free persons of color, that they might hold the slaves in greater subjection and security; whilst certain extremists in the South mistrusted it as an incipient move in the line of emancipation. It was openly resisted by both parties until those in the South, surprised at the strange alliance in which they found themselves, were led to a more careful consideration of the subject, and with few exceptions, became its friends." (Bishop John Johns)

The work of the Society was certainly slow and the results comparatively small, but it was a process of education in the right direction, and introduced a spirit which was changing the disposition of the South towards slavery, and promised the best results. That the process was slow was of the nature of the case. The adjustment of races as different as the Negro and the white, must needs be slow—how slow we seem, after the lapse of almost another century, to be only beginning to learn. Still it was doing good work, not only in transporting free Negroes, but in procuring the liberation of slaves and in educating the public, and it was sustained by the broadest and most judicious minds in the country.

One of the difficulties attending the colonization of free and emancipated Negroes in Liberia was the jealousy towards his returning brother, in spite of his acquirements in the direction of civilization, which soon began to be manifested by the natives of that region; and not jealousy only, but what was more surprising, the measure of contempt manifested towards the colonists by the natives of the higher castes, who professed to recognize in them but the descendants of their own slaves, which they had sold in the past. A missionary in Liberia, who was not of Southern birth or sympathies, told the writer only a year or so ago, that this feeling of superiority on the part of the higher caste African towards the citizen of Liberia exists to-day, and my informant thought the feeling was not without a basis of justification, adding that the missionaries themselves recognized the superiority of the higher class of Africans over those of the slave class of Negroes in Africa, and selected the scholars for their school and their native workers from the higher, and not from the lower class, who constitute the slaves in Africa to-day, and from which the mass of the slaves sold to America had been drafted by the African traders in the past. It has not infrequently happened that these traders of the dominant class have themselves been captured in war or otherwise and sold into slavery. Such exceptional Negroes have often been observed in this country, and their superior qualities accounted for by themselves in this way. A short time ago I was told by one of the most intelligent and best thoroughbred Negroes in every respect that I have ever known, that his ancestor was an African of high degree, who had been captured himself along with a lot of his own slaves which he had brought down to the coast to sell. This descendant of the captured chief is now a judicious worker in one of our best Negro institutions.

The difficulties of the work of the Colonization Society were manifold and great, but it pressed on and by 1856 had sent between nine and ten thousand emigrants to Liberia, about one-third of whom had been free Negroes. But there was a class of agitators with whom neither the laws of nature with regard to races, nor the judgment of the best informed people in the United States had force. With these the Colonization Society became a thing wholly suspected and discredited; and instead of that coöperation between the North and the South which the immense problem demanded, and which the colonization societies fostered, a crusade for unconditional abolition was inaugurated which expressed itself in abolition literature disseminated throughout the country and through emissaries who, under one pretext or another, found their way into the most remote sections of the South. It may be surprising that any effort should have been made to reach the slaves through letters, but there were many more Negroes in the South between 1800 and 1830 who could read than there were in 1861. The incendiary character of these emissaries and of

their literature, tending as both did to produce every form of irritation and dissatisfaction among the Negroes, and sometimes, as in Walker's appeal in 1830, urging the slaves to secret, concerted, and desperate revolt to "kill or be killed," discouraged the teaching of the Negroes to read, and was responsible for many other unfortunate results to the Negro. To quote the opinion of Mr. Benton of Missouri, in 1835: "The abolition societies have thrown the state of the emancipation question fifty years back, and subjected every traveler and every immigrant from non-slaveholding states to be received with suspicion and jealousy in the slave-holding states. Further, they have occasioned many slaves to lose their lives, caused the privileges of slaves to be curtailed, and their bonds to be more tightly drawn, besides opening a gulf of misery to the free people of color."

Reference is made to the work of these societies, not to awaken unpleasant recollections, and still less to impugn the sincerity of the agents, who, however mistaken in their efforts, were certainly devoted; but to emphasize the fact that the problem to be solved between these races was—as it still is—not alone the question of the freedom of the Negro, but the far deeper and more complex one of his relation to the white man—a problem which can never be solved without the cordial coöperation of the man upon whom most depends, the white man of the South. Many of the best minds and best men of the South were earnestly seeking its solution under great difficulties. To suspect and disparage their motives and efforts, and go on to antagonize them by methods in the last degree dangerous to the peace if not the very existence of Southern society, was a fatal mistake.

How great the danger resulting from the inflammatory methods adopted by the abolition societies might at any moment become was illustrated in Virginia in August of 1831. In all the years between 1619 and 1831 Virginia was remarkably free from anything deserving the name of a servile insurrection. The characteristics of the two races and the nature of slavery as it existed in Virginia were both unfavorable to it. During the Revolution when in 1781 the British encouraged the Negroes to revolt, and Cornwallis carried off 30,000 from the State (most of whom died of smallpox and camp fever, the rest being shipped to the West Indies and Nova Scotia), there was still marked faithfulness on the part of the slaves to their masters. In August, 1800, Gabriel Prosser, a Negro, tried to raise an insurrection among the Negroes of Richmond and Henrico Counties, but no life was destroyed by the insurrectionists. In this same year a Negro was born in Southampton County, who was afterwards known as Nat Turner. His mother is said to have been a native African, and was very wild, and his father was an unruly and impracticable Negro, but the child became nevertheless a pet and favorite of his master on account of his unusually quick mind, and was taught to read. He became in early life a religious enthusiast, was sober and well-behaved and in-

dustrious ; was an object of special favor and confidence in his master's and mistress's regard (who, he himself testified, were only too indulgent to him), and he had great influence with his fellow servants as their preacher and oracle in general. When about twenty-five years old he became religiously fanatical, and the subject of delusions as to his power to see signs and visions, and receive revelations ; and this state of religious confusion and mystery continued until the year 1831, when he plotted the destruction of the white people without regard to age or sex. Taking six other Negroes into the plot, and selecting a season at the end of summer, when little work was being done, and the people were enjoying a time of relaxation, and when many of the white men happened to be away from the neighborhood, he began, Sunday night, August 21, with killing his master and mistress with his own hands as they lay in bed—the conspirators having insisted that he should strike the first blow—and in less than two days had gathered by sympathy and compulsion sixty or seventy Negroes and had killed fifty-five white people in the quiet and scattered population of Southampton County. Of those killed about forty were defenseless women and children. The murders were perpetrated with every mark of savage brutality. Not more than forty of the Negroes who went with Nat were guilty, the rest being compelled to take part. As soon as knowledge of the insurrection spread, and as many as twenty white men could get together, the force of the Negroes was broken and scattered. The most striking features of the tragedy were, first, the faithfulness of the great mass of the slaves, and the devotion with which in several cases they stood openly by their white people and risked their lives in defending them ; and next the calm and careful justice that was done the insurgents after the mutiny was quelled, and the concern of the masters to defend the character and save the lives of their slaves wherever it could be justly done.

That there were excitement, alarm, and indignation generally throughout the South was inevitable, and strenuous precautions for the control of the slave population were at once taken, resulting for a while in a severer discipline than had ever existed before—for at no time had there ever been such a feeling of security on the part of the white people, or such liberty enjoyed by the black people as during the years immediately preceding the insurrection. In the next legislature a special committee was at once appointed to investigate the whole question relating to slaves, free Negroes, and mulattoes ; and on motion of Mr. T. Jefferson Randolph this committee was instructed “to inquire into the expediency of submitting to the qualified voters of the several towns, cities, boroughs, and counties of the Commonwealth, the propriety of providing by law that the children of all private slaves who may be born in the State on or after the 4th of July, 1840, shall become the property of the Commonwealth, the males at twenty-one years, and the females at eighteen, if detained by their owners within

the limits of Virginia until they shall have arrived at that age ; and that they shall be hired out until the net sum arising therefrom shall be sufficient to defray the expense of their removal beyond the limits of the United States." This motion was carried by a vote of 116 to 7. But Mr. Broadnax, chairman of the committee, reported as the opinion of the committee "that it is inexpedient for the present to make any legislative enactment for the abolition of slavery." This report was adopted with the following introductory amendment: "Profoundly sensible of the great evils arising from the condition of the colored population of this Commonwealth ; induced by humanity as well as by policy to an immediate effort for the removal, in the first place, as well of those who are now free, as of such as may hereafter become free ; believing that this effort, while it is in just accordance with the sentiment of the community on the subject, will absorb all our present means, and that a further action for the removal of the slaves should await a more definite development of public opinion ; Resolved,¹ etc."—

There can be no doubt that a majority of the people of Virginia were in favor of some plan of emancipation at this time. Why was none effected ? Because they were in the first place evidently equally unwilling to emancipate the slaves on any other terms than that they should be deported out of Virginia. They were not willing to keep the Negroes in the State as free Negroes, their opinion being based on their experience that the free Negroes were the most worthless, helpless, and incorrigible part of the population; and they had ample opportunity for judging, for there were many. In Southampton County alone in 1830 there were 1,745 free persons other than whites, which of course indicates all sorts of free colored people,² and in the second place if the slaves were freed and sent out of the country, where was any corresponding population to be found to keep the states (almost wholly dependent upon agriculture) from desolation and bankruptcy ? It may be averred that at last the Negroes were both freed and retained in the country, and all under circumstances far more unfavorable than those of 1831, and that the State survived, and has recovered from the desolation and bankruptcy. A merciful Providence is certainly to be thanked for this; but the operation may be compared to a man having a tumor cut out of him by the explosion of a bombshell among his vitals. He may well be excused for not choosing the method, or thanking the operator if he chance to survive his kind office.

The ill effects of the Southampton massacre upon the condition of the slaves was felt throughout the South. Restrictions were laid upon teaching them to read ; curfew laws were passed in some cities ; and in some states, as in North Carolina, where free Negroes had been allowed to vote ever since 1777, the franchise was denied them by constitutional amendment. Any coöperation between the South and

¹ The Southampton Insurrection—Drewry, pp. 162-163

² Drewry, p. 109

the North for the solution of the slave question became more difficult than ever. Whether that tragedy was in any way directly brought about by emissaries from the North cannot be ascertained, and may well be doubted; but the fact that after its hideous nature became known, such agents continued to be sent into the South in increasing numbers, and counsel given to the slaves which would naturally produce a like result wherever a Negro of sufficient mind and audacity might be disaffected, produced a deep-seated distrust towards the people of the North, which often extended where it was not deserved, but which was inevitable under the circumstances. Not two generations had passed since slavery had existed in every Northern state. It had been removed certainly as much by climatic and economic as by moral influences, and the trade had been continued twenty years by the united vote of New England against the protest and efforts of Virginia, and, whether wisely or not, it was certainly recognized and protected by the common Constitution of the country. The people of Virginia were no more responsible for its existence in the country than were the people north of her, and were deeply and conscientiously concerned about it, and were seeking deliverance from it; but as Mr. Jefferson had long ago declared, they were in the position of "holding the wolf by the ears." The uncompromising and inimical attitude of the extreme party in the North, the scathing verses of their popular poets, the secret and persistent efforts of their agents in the South, without regard to consequences, were gradually disintegrating the very cement of our political society, which consists not so much in contracts and constitution, as in loyalty to the natural ties of blood, of common traditions, and of mutual interests.

During this critical period a considerable number of Negroes were set free and sent out of Virginia through the Colonization Society, or settled in Western states, as was the case with John Randolph's Negroes, or settled in Virginia, as was the case with Richard Randolph's Negroes. But none of the results were very encouraging. To the Negroes who had kind masters, and only such would be likely to be set free, it was a great shock to be moved from the old homes and the old associations, into unknown localities, and untried conditions of life; and free Negroes in any considerable numbers were not much more welcome in Missouri or Ohio than in Virginia. Many pathetic instances occurred in these experiments, as when Juba, Mr. Randolph's head hostler, lay down and died when the time came for him to leave his splendid stud of horses and his loved Virginia life of respect and confidence and go and be a free Negro in Ohio. And sometimes amusing things would occur, as when a family near Fredericksburg received a glowing letter from "The Honorable James Cephas, of Liberia." Who James Cephas could be they could not imagine, until they remembered that, years before, their good old butler Josephus had carried out to Liberia a little boy named Jim.

In the meantime that measure of discipline, culture, and Christianity, which makes the difference between the African savage and a good representative of the Virginia Negro, was being accomplished by those quiet, steady forces of work and personal influence which have accomplished most of the good that any of us enjoy. No race ever made more progress according to their ability in the same length of time than the African Negro made on the Virginia plantation. The advance from the naked savage to the kindly, cultured, respectful, and trusted house servant, who was indeed a loved and cherished friend, was immense. Perhaps the best of these good results were accomplished through the influence of the conscientious mistress, when goodness and culture were combined with good sense and authority. Such a mistress in a lifetime of association and ministry—for it was nothing less—would become almost an idol to her people. “She was pretty to meet, and pretty to follow, and would light down among us like a beautiful bird,” was the description an old servant gave of her mistress whose life had been very largely given up for them. The extent of this influence and sacrifice is scarcely realized.

Not the slightest apology for slavery is contemplated ; enough to say, Virginia had the Negro and did what she could for him, and the product in hosts of instances was fine and good. Truly, in the churches all was not done that should have been done ; but is it ever ? Bishop Meade saw to it that talented men like Castleman and Church-hill Gibson carefully prepared sermons for servants and taught them. The learned Dr. Hanckel did the same work in South Carolina before he came to Virginia, and Dr. Broadus of the Baptist Church began his distinguished ministry the same way, and said that his best preparation was studying Butler’s Analogy and preaching to Negroes. In earlier times Dr. Davies, afterwards President of Princeton, was active in work among Negroes; these are but instances. Many is the man in Virginia to-day who learned his catechism along with his black playfellow, his mother being the teacher of both alike. A picture comes to mind. The children of the family are getting up before sunrise, and gathering in a large hall where there are all sizes and conditions of Negroes. It is the daily early prayer. A venerable and distinguished old Negro, his hair as white as snow, and his face as black as ebony, conducts the simple service, reading the Scriptures, giving out the hymns line by line, and then leading the company in prayer, after which all go to their daily duties. The white children have still more prayers awaiting them before breakfast when the grown people are up. This was during the war between the States.

The faithfulness of the Negroes during that period is to their eternal honor, and reflects no less favorably upon their owners, and upon the general condition of their lives. It is impossible to discount the broad and conclusive character of this evidence in both respects. The persecution and consequent dissatisfaction, irritation, and inflam-

mable material which was supposed to exist so largely, was not found either at Harper's Ferry in 1859 or even under the still severer trials which followed during the war. This has been charged to the "inaptness of the Negro to coöperate in hazardous enterprises in behalf of freedom." It may best be credited to the simple goodness of his heart. Never was a people in slavery so tempted, and never, to their own credit and to the credit of their masters, did a race of slaves show such loyalty, moderation, and affection. No one who saw it can ever forget it.

A scene of singular pathos occurred one Sunday afternoon in the substantial and well-furnished brick and slate chapel which was built for the servants of three adjacent plantations belonging to the same family in middle Virginia. The white people were worshiping with the colored people in their chapel this afternoon; venerable old Uncle Ned was again the minister of all alike. News had just come of the battle of Gettysburg, and deep concern weighed on all; and when Uncle Ned in the midst of his prayer lifted his hands and voice in behalf of the (Confederate) army, he poured out an appeal that brought tears to the eyes, so earnest and so heartfelt was his prayer. At that same time in the Valley of Virginia, an old Mammy of erect and commanding appearance, might have been seen going out upon a little hilltop behind her cabin each night before she went to sleep, and there she would stand and call aloud three times the name of her favorite among her master's children, a boy who, though but a lad, was away with Lee's army. This she did every night of his absence, and it so happened that when Appomattox was come, and the boy was making his way home with his parole of honor buttoned up in his worn gray jacket, he approached his home in the night, and through the darkness heard his name ring out where his old Mammy stood calling and waiting for him. Years after the war I saw her body borne into the church by six of the first gentlemen of the parish, her loved boy and his family the chief mourners. The services of the church were conducted by myself, and we laid good Mammy Evelyn in the family lot with those she had so faithfully loved and served.

We of the South owe the Negro much, and his presence among us presents a problem which touches us at all points, social, economic, religious, and political. And since it cannot be solved speedily, what we should be concerned to know and to accomplish is rather our present duty than any remote results. The patient operation of Christian influence and effort will be the elevating force for this as for every other race. To do justly, love mercy, and all with kindly sympathy, is the only basis for mutual adjustment and progress. Some of his helpers often remind the Negro that his place is in the South, and that he should not wander from it. In a sense this will always be true, but is it not better to let the Negro go abroad where he pleases, and even to encourage him to do so? Congested populations of

Negroes are not good for them nor for any locality ; and it is well for the rest of the country to know the Negro, and for the Negro to know the rest of the country less by theory and more by experience.

The writer is in a position to see much of the work and results of one of the largest and best institutions for the teaching and training of Negroes, the Hampton Institute. It is a wonderful school in its many-sidedness and in its equipment, and it is doing a great work. But it may well be believed that the best element in the work is not the academic instruction, nor the trade schools, indispensable as these are, but the personal influence of superior minds guided by devoted Christian principles. Christianity is the key to the whole problem.

But in the application of all our efforts one law of nature must never be forgotten, and that is that the most deep-seated and permanent of our characteristics are our racial characteristics. They are quite geological in their formation; and therefore to attempt sudden changes or to expect quick results in the Negro or in any other kind of man in things touching his racial status is one of the greatest possible mistakes. No social, educational, or political scheme can regenerate a man out of his God-given nature, and this is eminently true of the Negro, whose racial characteristics are so marked. But retaining all that of race belongs to him, the Negro as well as any other man can enter the school of that higher life in which alone are laid the sure foundations of our best capacities; he can develop his manhood to its height, he can be born of the Spirit, and become the true and faithful child of the one God and Father of all, and add his portion to the work of mankind, a portion by no means to be despised and of which his Lord and ours will be the judge, "when God has made the pile complete."

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